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Pakistan Mulls Major Civil Service Overhaul

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Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken concrete steps to modernize Pakistan's civil service, forming a committee tasked with overhauling the country's outdated bureaucratic structure. The move follows a detailed briefing from Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, who presented a set of proposals aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency and introducing merit-based practices.

During a high-level meeting in Islamabad on July 24, attended by cabinet ministers, senior bureaucrats, and policy experts, Minister Iqbal outlined recommendations to streamline governance and align the bureaucracy with international standards. These include the

creation of a National Executive Service for top-performing officers, a shift to performance-based evaluations, and the appointment of sector-specific experts on a contractual basis.

The Prime Minister's Office confirmed that the meeting concluded with the formation of a reform committee under Ahsan Iqbal's leadership. The committee has been instructed to refine the proposals and deliver a detailed implementation roadmap within the coming weeks.

Officials attending the meeting emphasized the urgency of civil service reform, citing systemic inefficiencies that have affected major policy initiatives. One example is the Special Investment Facilitation Council, which has encountered administrative delays and capacity gaps. Participants argued that without restructuring, Pakistan's bureaucracy will continue to struggle with delivering results in key sectors.

Under the proposed model, the National Executive Service would serve as a top-tier cadre of highly qualified officers selected from across government ministries. Their focus would include leadership, innovation, and accountability. The introduction of experts from outside the civil service, particularly in technical areas such as planning, finance, and energy, is also expected to increase institutional competence.

While past governments have attempted similar reforms, the current initiative appears to have stronger political backing and a clearer mandate. Minister Iqbal noted that the time has come to replace outdated systems with transparent, measurable performance indicators.

The committee's final recommendations are expected to cover recruitment, training, promotions, compensation, and overall structural reforms. If implemented, the changes would mark the most comprehensive civil service overhaul in Pakistan in decades.

The government has not announced a deadline for implementing the reforms, but officials stated that a phased approach is likely. As expectations rise, civil servants and experts alike will be watching closely to see whether this effort delivers lasting change.